

Message Text

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FM USDEL SECRETARY IN JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS FLASH
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 SECTO 9018

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS)
SUBJ: AUGUST 6 MEETING WITH MINISTERIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE -
TOPIC: SOUTHERN LEBANON

REF: JERUSALEM 2168

1. SUMMARY: IN THE DISCUSSION ON SOUTHERN LEBANON, PRIME MINISTER BEGIN RECOMMENDED AN IMMEDIATE DEMARCHE TO THE SYRAISN TO AVERT AN ALL-OUT ASSAULT ON EAST BEIRUT'S CHRISTIANS. WEIZMAN VOICED THE GOI'S CONCERNS OVER INCREASED SYRIAN PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON. HE RESTATED ISRAEL'S NORTHER BORDER SECURITY CONCERNS AND THE GOI'S MORAL COMMITMENT TO SOUTH LEBANON'S CHRISTIANS. WEIZMAN INDICATED THAT ISRAEL HAD AGREED TO THE DEPLOYMENT OF A LEBANON FORCE IN TIBNIN BUT HAD BEEN DISTURBED BY VARIOUS ACTIONS SURROUNDING ITS MOVEMENT SOUTH. THE TREATMENT OF HADDAD, WEIZMAN ADDED, RESULTED IN HIS (HADDAD'S) OPPOSING THE LEBANESE FORCE'S MOVE SOUTH, AND THIS WAS NOW THE MAJOR PROBLEM. HE ADMITTED

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THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD NOT DISCOURAGED HADDAD'S OPPOSITION. CHIEF OF STAFF EITAN SURVEYED THE CURRENT SITUATION ON THE GROUND, AND LISTED THE ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO TIBNIN, WHICH HAD BEEN THE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION IN DAILY MEETING BETWEEN HADDAD, UNIFIL, IDF AND LEBANESE ARMY REPRESENTATIVES. WEIZMAN EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THESE NEGOTIATIONS CAN BEAR FRUIT IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, BUT

FEARS ENTANGLEMENT OF THE PROBLEM WITH DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NORTH. SECRETARY VANCE STRESSED THE NECESSITY OF SOLVING THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AVOID SEVERE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES. BEGIN INSISTED THAT ISRAEL IS NOT A PARTY TO INTERNAL LEBANESE PROBLEMS AND DOES NOT CONTROL HADDAD; ISRAEL THEREFORE REJECTED ANY CAUSE FOR SECURITY COUNCIL CRITICISM OF ISRAEL. WEIZMAN ASKED ABOUT POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE SYRIAN ARMY ROLE IN NORTH LEBANON. SECRETARY VANCE REPLIED THAT THERE ARE NONE IN THE OFFING, BUT AGREED WITH WEIZMAN THAT IT WOULD BE BEST FOR ALL IF SYRIA WITHDREW EVENTUALLY. THE SECRETARY RESTATED THAT THE USG HAS A COMMITMENT TO LEBANON'S INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. HE REPEATED THAT THE US WOULD VIEW WITH CONCERN ANY ATTEMPT TO EXTEND SYRIAN INFLUENCE WHICH MIGHT THREATEN ISRAEL'S SECURITY. IDF INTELLIGENCE CHIEF GAZIT STATED THAT HADDAD IS INSISTING ON TWO CONDITIONS IN ADDITION TO REINSTATEMENT: (1) THE LEBANESE ARMY CANNOT TAKE "HEAVY EQUIPMENT" TO TIBNIN, AND (2) A RESUPPLY ROUTE MUST BE ESTABLISHED WHICH DOES NOT TRANSIT THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES. LATER IN THE DAY BEGIN REPORTED ON A PROPOSAL MADE TO HADDAD BY SAAD (APPARENTLY ON AUGUST 5, ACCORDING TO THE UN). IT WAS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY GENERAL KHOURI, BUT HAD NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY APPROVED BY THE GOL. END SUMMARY

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2. SOUTHERN LEBANON WAS THE SECOND TOPIC OF PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S RECOMMENDED AGENDA. HE OPENED THE DISCUSSION BY STATING THAT AT MIDNIGHT LAST NIGHT HE HAD RECEIVED A MESSAGE THAT THE SYRIANS WERE PREPARING FOR AN ALL-OUT DRIVE TO CRUSH THE CHRISTIANS IN EAST BEIRUT, PLANNED TO COMMENCE BETWEEN 8 AND 10 AUGUST. HE RECOMMENDED AN IMMEDIATE US DEMARCHE TO THE SYRIANS ON AN URGENT BASIS, NOT ONLY TO PREVENT SUCH AN ATTACK BUT ALSO TO ACHIEVE A CEASE-FIRE IN THE BEIRUT AREA. THE SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON, NORTH AND SOUTH, WAS THE DOMINANT THEME OF THE ENSUING DISCUSSION.

3. EZER WEIZMAN THEN DESCRIBED ISRAELI CONCERNS ABOUT THE SITUATION IN LEBANON. HE STATED THAT HE KNEW OF /THE OPINION" THAT THE SYRIANS CAN SERVE AS A PACIFYING FORCE IN LEBANON, BUT "THE CLOSER THEY COME TO THE GOOD FENCE, THE MORE DELICATE THE SITUATION BECOMES." HE RESTATED ISRAEL'S REAL SECURITY CONCERN FOR ITS NORTHERN BORDER, AS WELL AS WHAT THE GOI VIEWS AS A MORAL COMMITMENT TO THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

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4. WEIZMAN INDICATED THAT ISRAEL HAD AGREED TO THE DEPLOY-
MENT OF A LEBANESE ARMY FORCE IN TIBNIN. THE GOI'S INITIAL
IMPRESSION WAS THAT THIS WAS TO BE A TOKEN FORCE TO "SHOW
THE FLAG" AND WHICH WOULD BE SURROUNDED BY UNIFIL. HOWEVER,
ALL THE ACTIONS TAKEN TO BRING ABOUT THIS DEPLOYMENT HAVE
RAISED CONCERNS AS TO THE FORCE'S REAL OBJECTIVE. THE
FOLLOWING INDICATORS HAVE CONVINCED THE ISRAELIS THAT THE
MOVE SOUTH IS A SYRIAN PLAN TO DESTROY THE CHRISTIAN EN-
CLAVES. FIRST OF ALL, THERE WAS THE VERY SHORT NOTICE FOR
A REQUESTED MEETING OF THE ILMAC TO DISCUSS THE MOVEMENT
SOUTH. "WHAT WAS THE HURRY?" THE UNIT CHOSEN WAS HIGHLY
SUSPECT SINCE IT WAS SYRIAN-TRAINED AND IS 80PCT MOSLEM IN
ITS MAKEUP. THE ROUTE TO BE TAKEN - THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN
ENCLAVES - WAS HIGHLY ARTIFICIAL AND NOT THE NORMAL OR
NATURAL ROUTE TO TIBNIN. THE FACT THAT A SYRIAN COMPANY
ACCOMPANIED THE LEBANESE UNIT SOUTH FURTHER HEIGHTENED
SUSPICIONS. THE EQUIPMENT THAT WAS BROUGHT DOWN, SPECI-
FICALLY APC'S AND ARTILLERY, WAS MORE THAN UNIFIL UNITS
IN THE AREA POSSESS. ISRAEL HAD INFORMATION FROM LEBANESE
ARMY OFFICERS IN BATTALION (SIC) THAT THE LAF INTENTION
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WAS TO LEAVE SOME ELEMENTS OF THE GROUP IN MARJAYOUN, EL-

KHIYAM AND OTHER VILLAGES WITHIN THE ENCLAVE. IT SHOULD BE NO SURPRISE HADDAD AND ISRAELIS WERE SUSPICIOUS.

5. EFFORTS MADE TO REMOVE HADDAD BY ORDERS TO REPORT TO BEIRUT, ENTICEMENTS TO LEAVE THE AREA AND THE COUNTRY, AND ORDERS OF HIS SUSPENSION FROM THE ARMY ARE THE MAJOR OBSTACLE. WEIZMAN STATED THAT BECAUSE OF THE SITUATION, HADDAD HAD PUT HIS BACK UP AND HAD OPPOSED THE MOVE OF THE LEBANESE BATTALION SOUTH. HE ADMITTED THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD NOT DISCOURAGED HADDAD'S OPPOSITION (-- "I DON'T SAY WE DIDN'T TELL HIM TO DO THIS). IF HE PACKS UP (AND LEAVES), THERE WILL BE REAL TROUBLE."

6. A SURVEY OF THE CURRENT SITUATION WAS PRESENTED BY THE CHIEF-OF-STAFF LT. GENERAL EITAN. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY FORCE WAS ARRANGED IN THREE COMPANIES IN THE KAWKABA AREA. THE SYRIAN FORCE WHICH ESCORTED THE COMPANY HAD WITHDRAWN A BIT BUT WAS STILL SOME 15 KMS SOUTH OF THE RED LINE. THERE ARE INTELLIGENCE REPORTS THAT THE TERRORISTS WHO ACQUIESCED IN THE MOVE TO THE SOUTH HAVE DECIDED TO OPEN FIRE ON THE LEBANESE ARMY IF IT SHOULD ATTEMPT TO RETURN TO THE NORTH. HE POINTED OUT THERE HAVE BEEN DAILY MEETINGS BETWEEN HADDAD AND THE LEBANESE ARMY, WITH UNIFIL AND ISRAELI OFFICERS OFTEN IN ATTENDANCE. AT THESE MEETINGS, VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES HAVE BEEN PROPOSED: THAT THE FORCE PROCEED THROUGH NABATIYAH TO TIBNIN OR THAT THE LEBANESE FORCE TAKE A ROUTE EAST OF THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE VIA KFAR SHUBA SOUTH TO THE ISRAELI BORDER ROAD AND THEN WEST TO TIBNIN, AVOIDING MARJAYOUN AND EL-KHIYAM. EACH OF THESE ROUTES REQUIRES ONLY 1 AND 1/2 HOURS OF MOVEMENT TO TIBNIN, BUT ROUTE IS NOT NOW THE CENTRAL ISSUE. IN WEIZMAN'S OPINION, WITH FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS, THERE CAN BE
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PROGRESS WITHIN THE NEXT 2 TO 3 DAYS. HOWEVER, HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT HOW THE SOUTH IS LINKED TO THE PROBLEM OF THE NORTH AND THE POTENTIAL FOR A "BLOW-UP" IN BEIRUT.

7. SECRETARY VANCE MADE NO COMMENT CONCERNING THE DECISION TO MOVE THE LEBANESE ARMY SOUTH. HOWEVER, HE STATED THAT IF THIS MOVE WAS NOT SUCCESSFUL, THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES COULD BE THAT UNIFIL MIGHT NOT BE RENEWED; THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT COULD FALL; AND THE PROBLEM OF SOUTHERN LEBANON COULD BE RAISED IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL "WITH ALL THAT GOES WITH IT, INCLUDING CRITICISM OF ISRAEL." THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO GET AROUND THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM WITHOUT SEVERE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES. AT THIS POINT, BEGIN REPEATED AN EARLIER COMMENT THAT THE GOI IS NOT A PARTY TO THE INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF LEBANON. HE ADMITTED

THAT ISRAEL HAS "SOM INFLUENCE - WE GIVE THE CHRISTIANS
ARMS, TRUE; LIKE THE SYRIANS GET ARMS FROM THE USSR."
HOWEVER, HE INSISTED THAT THE GOI CANNOT GIVE HADDAD ORDERS
AND HAVE THEM ACCEPTED WITHOUT QUESTION. "SOMETIMES HADDAD
ACCEPTS OUR ADVICE AND SOMETIMES NOT." INASMUCH AS ISRAEL
IS NOT INTERFERING THE INTERNAL QUARRELS OF LEBANON,
BEGIN REJECTED ANY CAUSE FOR CRITICISM OF ISRAEL IN THE
SECURITY COUNCIL - "IT IS NO THREAT."

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8. WEIZMAN RAISED THE QUESTION OF WHETHER IT WAS POSSIBLE
THAT THERE COULD BE A SOLUTION TO THE NORTHERN LEBANON
PROBLEM OTHER THAN THE SYRIAN ARMY. "WE THINK SYRIANS ARE
THERE TO STAY." WEIZMAN ASKED WHETHER THERE WERE AN ALTER-
NATIVE, COMPARABLE TO UNIFIL IN THE SOUTH. SECRETARY
VANCE REPLIED, "PROBABLY NOT." VANCE REVEALED THAT
HE HAD TALKED WITH MANY PEOPLE IN THE UNITED NATIONS ABOUT
SUCH A POSSIBILITY. IT HAD BEEN VERY DIFFICULT TO GET UN
CONTINGENTS INTO THE SOUTH FOR UNIFIL. IT WOULD REQUIRE
AT LEAST 6,000 MORE SOLDIERS FOR THE NORTH AND THIS COULD
BE VERY DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE. WEIZMAN CONCLUDED
THAT IT WOULD BE BEST FOR ALL IF SYRIA WOULD WITHDRAW,
AND THE SECRETARY AGREED THAT THIS WAS TRUE OVER TIME.
IN RESPONSE TO A CHALLENGE BY SHARON AS TO WHAT THE USG WAS
PREPARED TO DO IF SYRIA TRIES TO MOVE FURTHER INTO LEBANON,
THE SECRETARY RESTATED THAT: A) THE USG HAS A COMMITMENT TO THE

INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LEBANON; AND B) IF SYRIA SHOULD ATTEMPT TO EXTEND ITS INFLUENCE, THUS THREATENING THE SECURITY OF ISRAEL, THE USG WILL VIEW SUCH ACTION WITH
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GREATEST CONCERN. "WE WILL ACT WITH YOU TO SEE WHAT STEPS ARE NECESSARY - BUT I DON'T THINK IT WILL HAPPEN."

9. SECRETARY VANCE INDICATED THAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR PRACTICAL IDEAS TO GET THE LEBANESE ARMY TO TIBNIN. AMBASSADOR LEWIS COMMENTED THAT THE MAJOR REMAINING OBSTACLE SEEMED TO BE HADDAD'S INSISTENCE ON REINSTATEMENT. IDF INTELLIGENCE CHIEF GAZIT DEMURRED AND SAID HADDAD HAD THREE CONDITIONS PRIOR TO THE MOVEMENT OF THE LEBANESE FORCE: A) HE MUST BE REINSTATED, B) THE LEBANESE ARMY CANNOT TAKE ITS "HEAVY EQUIPMENT" WITH IT, C) A RESUPPLY ROUTE THAT DOES NOT TRANSIT THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES MUST BE ESTABLISHED.

10. AT APPROXIMATELY 1315, PRIME MINISTER BEGIN TELEPHONED THE SECRETARY AND FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN, WHO WERE AT LUNCH TOGETHER, TO SAY THAT HE HAD JUST HEARD THAT THE PROBLEM OF THE BATTALION HAD BEEN RESOLVED; THAT HADDAD AND COL. SAAD HAD COME TO A FULL AGREEMENT. LATER IN THE AFTERNOON, AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING, BEGIN SAID HE HAD APPARENTLY BEEN SOMEWHAT PREMATURE. HE INDICATED THAT THE ISRAELI CHIEF OF STAFF HAD REPORTED THAT HADDAD AND SAAD HAD MET AUGUST 6 TO DISCUSS A PROPOSAL SAAD MADE WITH GENERAL KHOURY'S APPROVAL. THIS INVOLVED THE BATTALION "SPREADING OUT" AND DEPLOYING IN SAME GENERAL AREA WHERE IT IS NOW LODGED AND SUBSEQUENT TRANSPORT BY HELICOPTER TO TIBNIN OF ONE OF ITS COMPANIES. THERE WAS NO REPEAT NO REFERENCE IN THIS REPORT TO ANY DISCUSSION OF HADDAD'S STATUS.

11. IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT THIS AGREEMENT, IF IT EXISTS, STILL REQUIRES APPROVAL BY THE CIVILIAN LEADERS OF THE GOL, ALTHOUGH KHOURY WAS SAID TO HAVE ACCEPTED IT. HADDAD
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APPARENTLY WAS SO ELATED THAT HE IMMEDIATELY TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE PROBLEM WAS RESOLVED, AND IT WAS HADDAD'S STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS EARLIER IN THE DAY THAT HAD CAUSED BEGIN TO BELIEVE THAT THE MATTER WAS SETTLED.

12. MIKE NEWLIN HAS CHECKED WITH HIS UN SOURCES, WHO

KNOW OF NO MEETING BETWEEN HADDAD AND SAAD TODAY NOR OF
ANY RESOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM. UN BELIEVES HADDAD-SAAD
DISCUSSION WHICH TRIGGERED BEGIN'S AUGUST 6 COMMENTS ACTUALLY
TOOK PLACE YESTERDAY, AUGUST 5. SEE REFTEL.
VANCE

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